

CLAIMS

1. A method for a user computer to selectively activate a feature of a software package executing on the user computer comprising:

5 receiving a feature activation license from a remote server; and
activating an inactive feature originally present in the software package.

2. The method as recited in claim 1 further comprising sending a request for activation of the inactive feature from a user computer to the remote server before the feature activation
10 license is received by the remote server.

3. The method as recited in claim 2 wherein the inactive feature is not present in the software package and the inactive feature is bundled with the feature activation license.

15 4. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the inactive feature is activated automatically in response to a particular event.

5. The method as recited in claim 4 wherein the particular event is an expiration date.

20 6. The method as recited in claim 4 wherein the particular event is activation of another related inactive feature.

7. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the feature activation license is authenticated before the inactive feature is activated.

25 8. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein currency is exchanged from a user of the software package to the software vendor in exchange for the feature activation license.

9. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the inactive feature is activated for a set period of time.

10. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein a plurality of inactive features are activated concurrently.

11. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted.

12. The method as recited in claim 11 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted via a shared symmetric key.

13. The method as recited in claim 11 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted via an asymmetric private key.

14. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the feature activation license is verified via a plurality of digital certificates.

15. The method as recited in claim 1 further comprising adding a new feature to the software package wherein the new feature is encapsulated with the feature activation license.

16. The method as recited in claim 15 wherein a user of the software package is given an option of obtaining the new feature after requesting the feature activation license.

17. The method as recited in claim further 1 comprising adding a patch to the software package wherein the patch is encapsulated with the feature activation license.

18. The method as recited in claim 17 wherein a user of the software package is given an option of obtaining the patch after requesting the feature activation license.

19. A method for selectively activating a feature of a software package executing on a user computer comprising:

a remote server receives a request from a user computer for activation of an inactive feature that is originally present in the software package;

the remote server processes the request; and

the remote server sends a feature activation license to the user computer for activating the inactive feature.

20 The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the inactive feature is not originally present in the software package and is bundled with the feature activation license.

21. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the feature activation license is authenticated before the inactive feature is activated.

22. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein currency is exchanged from the user to the software vendor in exchange for the feature activation license.

23. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the inactive feature is activated on a single computer.

24. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the inactive feature is activated for a set period of time.

25. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein a plurality of inactive features are activated concurrently.

26. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the inactive feature is activated for a specific device.

27. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein a feature is activated on a plurality of devices.

28. The method as recited in claim 27 wherein the feature is activated for the plurality of devices via a group identifier.

29. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted.

30. The method as recited in claim 29 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted via a shared symmetric key.

31. The method as recited in claim 29 wherein the feature activation license is encrypted via an asymmetric private key.

32. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the feature activation license is verified via a plurality of digital certificates.

33. The method as recited in claim 19 further comprising adding a new feature to the software package wherein the new feature is encapsulated with the feature activation license.

34. The method as recited in claim 33 wherein the user is given an option of obtaining the new feature after requesting the feature activation license.

35. The method as recited in claim further 19 comprising adding a patch to the software package wherein the patch is encapsulated with the feature activation license.

36. The method as recited in claim 35 wherein the user is given an option of obtaining the patch after requesting the feature activation license.

37. The method as recited in claim 19 wherein the feature activation license is obtained electronically.

38. The method as recited in claim 37 wherein the feature activation license is obtained through email.

39. The method as recited in claim 37 wherein the feature activation license is obtained through a through an Internet web interface.

40. The method as recited in claim 37 wherein the feature activation license is obtained via FTP.

41. The method as recited in claim 37 wherein the feature activation license is obtained via SCP.

42. A method for selectively activating a feature of a software package executing on a user computer comprising:

a user requesting activation of an inactive feature originally present in the software package;
the user computer transmits a request for a feature activation license to a remote server of a
software vendor;

the remote server receives the request;

5 the remote server processes the request;

the remote server sends the feature activation license to the user computer;

the user computer receives the feature activation license; and

the user computer activates the inactive feature.

10 43. The method as recited in claim 42 wherein the feature activation license is authenticated
before the inactive feature is activated.

44. The method as recited in claim 42 wherein currency is exchanged from a user of the
software package to the software vendor in exchange for the feature activation license.

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45. The method as recited in claim 42 wherein the feature activation license is obtained
through a human interaction.

46. A system for selectively activating a feature of a software package comprising:

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a system information interface;

a device information segment on the system information interface wherein the device
information segment shows a product identification and a box identification;

a software list segment on the system information interface wherein the software list segment
shows a plurality of installed software packages;

a feature activation list segment on the system information interface wherein the feature activation list shows a status of installed features related to an individual installed software package; and

a software upgrade/installation interface on the system information interface wherein the software upgrade/installation interface is utilized for selectively activating an inactive feature.

47. The system as recited in claim 46 wherein the software list segment is further comprised of a name, a version, a description and an install date each of which is related to the individual software package.

48. The system as recited in claim 46 wherein the feature activation list segment is further comprised of a description, an activation date, an expiration date and a status each of which is related to an individual installed feature of the individual installed software package.

49. The system as recited in claim 46 wherein a feature activation license is obtained via the software upgrade/installation interface.

50. The system as recited in claim 49 wherein the feature activation license is obtained through an Internet web interface.

51. The system as recited in claim 49 wherein the feature activation license is obtained via FTP.

52. The system as recited in claim 49 wherein the feature activation license is obtained via SCP.

A data structure for use in selectively activating a feature of a software package executing on a user computer comprising:

a box identification corresponding to the user computer; and

5 a box feature identification that has a list of features to be activated.

54. A data structure for use in selectively activating a feature of a software package executing on a group of user computers comprising:

a group identification corresponding to the user computer; and

10 a group feature identification that has a list of features to be activated.

55. A software package which has inactive features that can only be activated through obtaining a feature activation license.

15 56. A method for determining a computer box identifier comprising:

obtaining a MAC identifier;

obtaining a system information component relating to the computer box; and

combining the MAC identifier and the system information component into the computer box identifier.